San Francisco Cinematheque:
40 Years In Focus

Part Two: 1971-1981

Program 7:

Chick Strand in the '70s

Curated by Carmen Vigil

Sunday, March 10th, 2002 at 7:30 pm — San Francisco Art Institute

Taking advantage of our recent 40th Anniversary as an opportunity to re-visit high points of Cinematheque's exhibition history, *40 Years In Focus* will present highlights of the scores of films and filmmakers we were privileged to present over the years. *Part Two: 1971-1981* covers a period of sustained financial and institutional stability, and includes the Program Directorships of Vincent Grenier, Carmen Vigil and Charles Wright.

A precursor to the *History of Bay Area Experimental Film and Video* series planned for 2003 by Pacific Film Archive and Cinematheque, *40 Years In Focus* will be presented in four sections spanning each decade. The series is curated by Steve Anker.

The seventies was Cinematheque co-founder Chick Strand's most prolific period as a filmmaker, during which she produced some of her most accomplished and endearing work. Tonight's selection exhibits a wide variety of cinematic concerns.

Cosas de Mi Vida (1976); 16mm, color, sound, 25 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Expressive documentary in an ethnographic approach about Anselmo, a Mexican Indian. It is a film about his struggle for survival in the Third World. Orphaned at age 7, he was the sole support of himself and his baby sister, who eventually starved and died in his arms. The film continues with Anselmo's struggle to live and to do something with his life other than a docile acceptance of poverty. Totally uneducated in a formal way, he taught himself how to play a horn and when he became a man he started his own street band. The film was started in 1965 and finished in 1975. During the 10 years, I saw the physical change in Anselmo's life in terms of things he could buy to make his family at first able to survive, and during the last years, to make them more comfortable. I felt a change in his spirit from a proud, individualistic and graceful man into one obsessed with possessions and role playing in order to get ahead and stay on top, but one cannot help but admire his energy and determination to succeed, to drag himself and is family out of the hopelessness and sameness of poverty to give them a future. Anselmo tells his own story in English although he does not speak the language. After he told me of his life in Spanish, I translated it into English and taught him how to say it. (CS)

Elasticity (1976); 16mm, color, sound, 25 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Impressionistic surrealism in three acts. The approach is literary experimental with optical effects. There are three mental states that are interesting: amnesia, euphoria and ecstasy. *Amnesia* is not knowing who you are and wanting desperately to know. I call this the White Night. *Euphoria* is not knowing who you are and not caring. This is the Dream of Meditation. *Ecstasy* is knowing exactly who you are and still not caring. I call this the Memory of the Future. (CS)

Cartoon le Mousse (1979); 16mm, b&w, sound, 15 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

"Chick Strand is a prolific and prodigiously gifted film artist who seems to break new ground with each new work. Her recent 'found footage' works such as *Cartoon le Mousse*, are extraordinarily beautiful, moving, visionary pieces that push this genre into previously unexplored territory. If poetry is the art of making evocative connections between otherwise dissimilar phenomena, then Chick Strand is a great poet, for these films transcend their material to create a surreal and sublime universe beyond reason." (Gene Youngblood)

Guacamole (1976); 16mm, color, sound, 10 minutes, print from Canyon Cinema

Poetic surrealism. Approach is experimental in relationship of image and sound. A film about the loss of innocence and the search for the essence of the human spirit. (CS)